

I claim:

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1. A method for operating a group of gaming machines interconnected by a network comprising the steps of:
- 5 allowing play to occur on the gaming machines, each of said gaming machines having a primary game associated therewith; detecting a triggering event; and initiating a single secondary game from one of the gaming machines upon the occurrence of the triggering event, said single
- 10 secondary game being common to the group of gaming machines.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of detecting a triggering event comprises:
- 15 monitoring an operating parameter of the gaming machines over the network; establishing a predetermined criterion for the operating parameter; and sending a triggering event signal through the network when the operating parameter meets the predetermined criterion.
- 20 3. The method of claim 2 further including: selecting one of the machines when the operating parameter meets the predetermined criterion; and initiating the secondary game from the selected machine.
- 25 4. The method of claim 3 further including paying a first bonus to the selected machine responsive to an outcome of the secondary game.
- 30 5. The method of claim 3 further including: providing an actuator at each of the gaming machines for initiating the primary game;

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5 sending a deactivation signal to the selected gaming machine;
disabling the actuator of the selected gaming machine, responsive
to the deactivation signal, so that the actuator does not initiate the
primary game; and

5 using the actuator to initiate the secondary game.

6. The method of claim 3 wherein the secondary game
comprises a multisegmented wheel, each segment of the wheel having a
predetermined bonus amount associated therewith, said method further
including:

10 displaying a multisegmented wheel on a video display device;

initiating a control signal for the secondary game from the
selected gaming machine, said control signal determining a bonus
payment displayed on one of the segments of the wheel; and

15 paying out a bonus to the selected gaming machine responsive to
said initiated control signal.

7. The method of claim 3 further including displaying a status
message on the selected gaming machine responsive to the secondary
game.

8. The method of claim 2 wherein the operating parameter is
the total amount of coins played on the group of gaming machines, and
the criterion is a predetermined number of coins.

9. The method of claim 2 wherein the operating parameter is
the total amount of money played on the gaming machines, and the
criterion is a predetermined amount of money.

10. The method of claim 2 further including zeroing the
monitored operating parameter after the operating parameter meets the
predetermined criterion.

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11. The method of claim 2, further including:
initiating a tertiary game responsive to a second triggering event;
and
paying out a second bonus responsive to an outcome of the
5 tertiary game.

12. The method of claim 11 further including:
monitoring a second operating parameter of the selected gaming
machine over the network;
10 establishing a second predetermined criterion; and
sending a second triggering event signal through the network
when the second operating parameter meets the second predetermined
criterion.

13. The method of claim 1 further including displaying the
secondary game on a plasma-based flat panel video display device in
common with the group of gaming machines.

14. An apparatus for selectively operating a plurality of
20 machines over a network, said apparatus comprising:
a plurality of gaming machines for playing a primary game
thereon;
an actuator coupled to each of the gaming machines for selective
activation of the primary game by a player at a respective gaming
25 machine;
a secondary game controller;
a network coupled to the gaming devices and the controller for
exchanging data between the secondary game controller and the gaming
devices; and
30 a secondary game coupled to the secondary game controller for
displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary
game controller;

SUBA) wherein the secondary game controller monitors the activity of the gaming devices over the network and causes the secondary game to initiate when an operating parameter meets a predetermined criterion.

5 15. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:
a plasma display monitor coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

10 16. The apparatus according to claim 15 further including an animation computer coupled to the plasma display monitor for driving the video display responsive to the secondary game controller.

15 17. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:
means for selecting one of the plurality of game machines when the operating parameter meets the criterion; and
means on said selected machine for initiating said secondary game, wherein said secondary game controller applies a first bonus to the selected machine responsive to an outcome of the secondary game.

20 SUBA) 18. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a configuration workstation remotely coupled to the secondary game controller over the network for remotely changing the predetermined criterion.

25 19. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a wireless data port coupled to the network for transmitting audit data to a remote wireless receiver.

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20. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:
a play counter for counting the total number of coins played across
the plurality of gaming machines, wherein the criterion is a
predetermined number of coins.

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21. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:
a play counter for counting the total amount of money played
across the plurality of gaming machines, wherein the criterion is a
predetermined amount of money.

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22. A method for operating a gaming machine comprising the
steps of:

allowing play to occur on the gaming machine;
detecting a triggering event based on a first criteria;
15 measuring a rate of play at the gaming machine; and
awarding a bonus after a second occurrence of the triggering
event if the measured rate of play at the gaming machine meets a
predetermined criteria.

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23. The method of claim 22 further comprising:
allowing play to occur at a plurality of other gaming machines;
and
initiating a secondary game from a selected one of the gaming
machines responsive to the triggering event.

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24. The method of claim 23 further comprising:
placing the selected gaming machine in a queue to play the
secondary game responsive to the triggering event, wherein the second
game can be initiated from the selected gaming machine only if the
30 selected machine is at the front of the queue; and
awarding a secondary game bonus to the selected machine
responsive to an outcome of the secondary game.

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25. The method of claim 23 further comprising:
initiating a tertiary game responsive to the secondary occurrence
of the triggering event; and
5 awarding the bonus to the selected gaming machine based on an
outcome of the tertiary game.

26. A method for operating a gaming device configured to play
a primary game comprising the steps of:
10 providing a plurality of gaming machines having a primary game
associated therewith;
coupling the gaming machines to a common video display device;
displaying a bonus amount on the video display device;
permitting players to play the primary game at the gaming
15 machines;
monitoring at least one variable related to user-controlled play on
the gaming machines;
establishing a predetermined criterion for one of said variables;
selecting one of the machines when said one variable meets the
20 criterion; and
awarding the bonus amount to said selected machine.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the criterion includes the
total coins played, the method further including the steps of:
25 monitoring the number of coins played from each of the machines;
incrementing a common counter by the number of coins played
from each of the machines; and
selecting the machine at which the coins were played that caused
the common counter to match the criterion established.

28. The method of claim 26 wherein the common display device
is a plasma-based flat panel display.

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29. The method of claim 26 further including the step of displaying a status message on the selected gaming machine responsive to the bonus.

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30. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a video display device coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

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31. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a liquid crystal display (LCD) device coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

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32. The method of claim 1 in which the triggering event is an occurrence of a predetermined reel combination on one of the group of gaming machines.